

Thorns 'n Roses

From community submissions

Roses to:

Margarit from the Outbound Transportation office: Besides doing a very informative briefing at the monthly PCS briefing, she was extremely helpful with our impending PCS.

She even provided me with paperwork that will assist us if our orders are delayed – all without me even asking the question.

Thanks for your effort, Margarit!

The German Bundeswehr troops who have been working on Stuttgart-area installations: Day after day, in the worst of weather, these young Soldiers perform their duties with the utmost respect and courtesy. Though the news still contains stories about international tensions, these troops are doing more than their part to further the historic friendship between Germany and the United States.

Adam from Charley's Restaurant on Kelley Barracks, for his customer-service skills, which are truly exceptional. Even at his relatively young age, Adam is a shining example of what all who work with the public should aspire to be.

Thorns to:

Residents of on-post housing who show no respect for their surroundings and their neighbors. Good taste prevents me from listing some of the more repugnant behaviors I have witnessed, but suffice it to say that some of our community members have a lot to learn about common courtesy.

E-mail comments to citizen@6asg.army.mil or fax them to 421-2570/civ. 0711-729-2570.

Personal vigilance can keep 'equal-opportunity killer' at bay

By Bob Van Elsberg
Commentary

Life may be unfair but death isn't – a fatal accident is an "equal-opportunity" killer. It doesn't care whether you're behind the wheel of a Humvee or a Honda: It will take you wherever it can.

I know. I have seen death many times during my 33 years in and around the military.

Back in 1974 I waved goodbye on a Friday afternoon to a couple of friends as they left to go canoeing in Washington state. Within 24 hours they were both dead – victims of alcohol and the "I-am-bulletproof" syndrome that led both of them to shun life jackets.

The year before, I saw a pretty young woman dying on the road next to her car. There was nothing I could do to help her.

There's an old saying that goes, "Die young and leave a handsome corpse." But believe me, there is nothing attractive in watching someone die.

Early in 2002, I interviewed the widow of an Air Force sergeant who'd gotten on the road drunk and hit a concrete barrier at 79 miles per hour.

Unbelted, he'd gone into the windshield and was declared brain dead the following day. He had a lot of bravado in his attitude about life.

As I interviewed his widow, I sat there helplessly as she broke down in tears. They'd gotten married and bought a house barely two months before he died.

When he ignored years of warnings against drinking and driving, he never thought about what it would do to the person who loved him most.

The problem with accidental death is that there's no 20-

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20 hindsight for those involved. There's no going back and doing things differently because of lessons learned. There is only one destination – and death gives no paroles.

That's why declaring war on accidents is important, even as we fight this war on terrorism. It hurts just as much to bury a loved one who died in an accident as one who died on the battlefield. Maybe, in reality, it hurts more.

Death in combat is at least for a purpose. Death from an accident does little except to provide a sad example.

Boston, Baltimore, Baghdad – it doesn't matter where you are, you're on the front lines of this war. Your best piece of protective "armor" is risk management.

Taking the time to identify risks, assess their severity, develop a plan to protect yourself, and then follow that plan can make you a victor in this war.

Ignoring the risks and relying on luck to get you through can quickly make you a victim.

Victor or victim – it's your choice.

Van Elsberg is managing editor of *Countermeasure* magazine. This commentary originally appeared online at www.army.mil/arnews.

THE CITIZEN

Col. Gwendolyn Bonéy-Harris
6th Area Support Group Commander

Public Affairs Officer
Jennifer Sanders
pao@6asg.army.mil

Editor
Hugh C. McBride
citizen@6asg.army.mil

Reporters

Melanie Casey
caseym@6asg.army.mil

Mildred Green
greenm@6asg.army.mil

Terri Alejandro
alejandrot@6asg.army.mil

Stuttgart Essentials
Christie Lawler
lawlerc@6asg.army.mil

Contact Information

Office Location: Building 3307-W, Kelley Barracks
U.S. Army Address: Unit 30401, APO AE 09107
German Address: Gebäude 3307-W, Kelley Barracks,
Plieningerstrasse, 70567 Stuttgart
Telephone: 421-2046/civ. 0711-729-2046
Fax: 421-2570/civ. 0711-729-2570

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My 'flash' course in fire safety

By Chief Warrant Officer 4
Michael Licholat
Commentary

There I was, five minutes from delivering a briefing for an air assault mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

I had only one chance to make a good first impression in front of our coalition brethren, so I was determined to put my best foot forward.

The projector had been warming up for a few minutes when I noticed there was some dust on the lens.

I wasn't going to stand for having a few specks casting shadows on my briefing, so I went to the supply locker to get a can of compressed air to shoo away the offending motes.

Not being multilingual, I wasn't able to read the label on the can, but I wasn't going to be bothered by that.

Those were my last pleasant thoughts

I was thinking pleasant thoughts about how clear my presentation was going to be as I pointed the tube at the projector's lens. Those were my last pleasant thoughts.

I pushed down on the spray nozzle when suddenly there was a low-pitched boom. I was instantly engulfed in a ball of flame that one eyewitness conservatively estimated to be 6 feet in diameter.

All the hair on my right arm was burned off, and the hair on my face was singed.

Stunned, I dropped the can. The

I was instantly engulfed in a ball of flame that one eyewitness conservatively estimated to be 6 feet in diameter. All the hair on my right arm was burned off, and the hair on my face was singed.

valve popped shut and the fire went out.

After performing a quick assessment of my injuries, I left the briefing area so I could look for any additional damage. As I made my way out of the briefing tent amid the arriving briefing attendants, the prominent comment was, "What is that smell?"

At my tent, my worst fears were confirmed: My moustache was now much shorter (but in direct compliance with AR 670-1), my eyelashes were almost gone, and my eyebrow hairs were all curled up.

Luckily, I'm what you'd call "follically challenged," so I didn't have anything to worry about there.

I quickly washed up, used a pair of scissors to trim the burnt ends off my moustache and eyebrows, and then returned to the podium with a couple of minutes to spare.

Note to self: Read the label!

So, how can you avoid having this happen to you? Most, if not all, of the canned air sold in America is non-flammable and has warning labels to keep you from misusing the product.

However, since we'd used up the "good stuff" we'd brought with us, the S-4 replaced it with whatever was closest at hand.

Unfortunately, our S-4 couldn't read the label either. That's something to bear in mind if you're buying commercial off-the-shelf items in countries that lack the consumer protection guidelines we have in America.

The fault lay squarely on my shoulders

In the end, the fault lay squarely on my shoulders. I took an aerosol can of unknown origin and sprayed it onto a projector containing a hot light bulb.

Furthermore, despite the fact that the can had a picture of a cat and a dog on it (I still don't know what that's all about), the back of the label had the word "Peligroso!" printed on it. I'm pretty sure that means "danger."

In the end, I got lucky and avoided a serious burn. And in the spirit of brotherhood, my comrades later hung a sign over my desk extolling my new nickname: "Flash! Do you mind if I smoke?"
courtesy: www.army.mil/arnews.